

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Faith Ringgold

Paintings and Story Quilts, 1964-2017

23 February 2018 - 28 April 2018

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present the first European solo exhibition of acclaimed African-American artist Faith Ringgold from 23 February to 28 April 2018. The show comprises a small selection of 1960s paintings from her renowned American People Series alongside an overview of her 'story quilts' from the 1980s to the present. Coinciding with the show, Ringgold will be in conversation at Tate Modern on Thursday 19 April from 6.30 to 8 pm, with an introduction provided by Frances Morris (Director, Tate Modern).

Throughout the 1960s, Ringgold produced politically charged paintings that shattered the notion of the American dream, highlighting racial and gender inequalities rife in society. Rendered in a style that synthesises post-Cubist Picasso, Pop Art and traditional African sculpture and design, the figures in these paintings reflect the tension arising from interracial contact and the psychological substructure of racism in everyday life, a far cry from the utopian aspirations of the civil rights movement happening at the time. The flat planes of colour and thin glazes of paint speak to the influence of Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden upon the artist's work.

From the early 1970s, Ringgold was instrumental in the organisation of protests against the predominantly male art world. Focusing her attention upon the Whitney Annual, Ringgold demanded that 50% of the artists should be female. In 1971, she set up Where We At, Black Women Artists, Inc (WWA), a collective of black female artists who felt neglected not only by the mainstream but also by the male dominated Black Arts Movement and the largely white Feminist one. Ironically, many years later, Ringgold's work is now on display at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney's Collection. In addition, the collective efforts of these female African-American artists including Ringgold were the subject of a recent exhibition at Brooklyn Museum, New York titled We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85, which is now on view at Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.

In the 1980s, Ringgold shifted her tone, moving away from the explicit works of the previous few decades. At the time, the artist was looking to appropriate a medium that was historically associated with femininity, yet could be implemented for subversive means. In 1980, Ringgold collaborated with her mother Willie Jones, a fashion designer and dressmaker, on her first quilt, Echoes of Harlem (1980), now in the permanent collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. This proved to be a formative experience for Ringgold. Tapping into the rich tradition of African-American quilt-making, and combining it with her love of European painting and the written word, Ringgold went on to develop her now legendary 'story quilt' technique. That the artist's great-grandmother Susie Shannon was born into slavery and produced quilts for plantation owners lends Ringgold's work a deeper, personal register.

Ringgold's solo exhibition at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery brings together a rich selection of works that follows the artist's passionate and poetic exploration of issues relating to race, gender and history throughout her career.

With thanks to ACA Galleries, New York.

About the artist

Faith Ringgold (b. 1930) lives and works in New Jersey. Her work is included in over 50 prominent public collections including Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MoMA, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Smithsonian Institute of Art, Washington; Baltimore Museum of Art; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Newark Museum and St. Louis Art Museum, to name a few.

Ringgold has received more than 75 awards, fellowships, citations and honours, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Fellowship for painting, two National Endowment for the Arts Awards (for painting and sculpture) and 23 honorary doctorates. Ringgold is professor emeritus at the University of California in San Diego, California.

In 2016, the Museum of Modern Art in New York acquired a significant mural-scale painting American People Series #20: Die (1967) for its permanent collection. This work was included in Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power at Tate Modern in London, 2017. American People Series #18: The Flag is Bleeding (1967) has now replaced the MoMA painting in Soul of a Nation while on show at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Arkansas and, later this year, at Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Ringgold's work will feature in a forthcoming exhibition at National Portrait Gallery, London opening in June 2018 that will focus on Michael Jackson's legacy.